

## TESTIMONY OF TOMORROW'S CHILD

Michigan House of Representatives

Committee on Health Policy

June 23, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Health Policy Committee for the opportunity to testify on this resolution to support research and a registry for Stillbirth. Mr. Chairman, I know you and several members of the Committee are longstanding champions of Tomorrow's Child and we thank you again for your belief in our work.

My name is Kathy Brandenburg and I'm here to speak on behalf of Tomorrow's Child. Tomorrow's Child was founded over 30 years ago by parents who had experienced an infant death. Our mission has remained the same – to provide grief support for families and prevention strategies to reduce infant deaths.

Tomorrow's Child is the state's central referral site for grief services and the only statewide program providing bereavement support for families who have experienced an infant death. We know first-hand the devastation of a baby's death on the entire family. Our database contains the names of hundreds of Michigan families that have experienced a stillbirth or fetal demise. For over thirty years, we've offered home visits, grief mailings, support groups, memorials and family events to bereaved families across the state.

Stillbirth is more common than you might think. Each year about 25,000 babies are stillborn in the U.S.; that is almost ten times as many deaths as occur from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). This means that about 1 stillbirth occurs for every 160 live births. The World Health Organization estimates that over 4 million stillbirths occur every year around the world.

Surveillance is a tool that public health officials use to monitor how often a certain disease or condition is occurring in the public at large. Surveillance for stillbirths is needed to accurately monitor its occurrence and to provide a resource for conducting studies looking for specific causes. Ultimately, surveillance will allow public health officials to develop and effectively evaluate prevention strategies for stillbirth.

More than 50 percent of the stillbirths occur in the last trimester of pregnancy and 15 percent occur during labor and delivery. Due to a lack of autopsy/investigation and inconsistencies in diagnosing these, more than 50 percent of all stillbirths remain unexplained. With standardized investigation and reporting of these deaths, researchers would be better able to determine the risk factors.

Rep. Green has offered a resolution, **House Resolution No. 102**, to memorialize the United States Congress to enact H.R. 521, the Stillbirth Awareness and Research Act of 2009. HR 102 would both standardize the definition of stillbirth and the method in which data is collected, in order to create a national repository of stillbirth data to assist researchers in conducting comprehensive studies in to the causes of, and possible

preventive strategies for, stillbirth. The bill also authorizes a public awareness campaign promoting good prenatal practices, including monitoring movements during the last trimester of pregnancy, to reduce the risk of stillbirth.

On behalf of Representative Green, his family and the hundreds of other Michigan families who have been so personally and profoundly affected by stillbirth, Tomorrow's Child is pleased to support Michigan House Resolution 102 and the Stillbirth Awareness and Research Act of 2009.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee for this opportunity to speak.

(For more information about Tomorrow's Child, please contact Sandra Frank at 1-800-331-7437 or [sfrank@tcmisids.org](mailto:sfrank@tcmisids.org).)